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CIA Agent's Murder Spurs Accusations

By Laurence Stern

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The murder of Central Intelligence Agency station chief Richard S. Welch in Athens on Tuesday touched off an exchange of accusations yesterday between CIA Director William E. Colby and a Washington-based intelligence muckraking organization, Fifth Estate.

Responding to attacks by former CIA agent David Phillips, Fifth Estate said yesterday that "if anyone is to blame for Mr. Welch's death, it is the CIA that sent him there to spy, and perhaps even to intervene in the affairs of the Greek government."

Colby's only public statement on the Welch murder was a response to the Fifth Estate's mimeographed statement issued at its headquarters in the Dupont Circle area.

"The so-called Counterspy of the Fifth Estate, without even an expression of human sympathy," said Colby, "has issued a statement which can only be called a shocking attempt to use the death of a dedicated American as fuel for its irresponsible and paranoid attack on other Americans serving their country here and abroad."

"I am sure that true Americans will repudiate this cynical statement," Colby said.

Other intelligence officials cited the publication of Welch's name in the organ of the Fifth Estate, "Counter-

Spy", as chief of station in Lima, Peru. Welch's name was mentioned in the spring, summer and winter issues of Counter-Spy.

"This was a hit list," said one official. "It is the first time one American fingered another to be rubbed out."

In the marble entrance hall at CIA headquarters in Langley there are 31 stars on display representing that many employees who have lost their lives in the line of duty since the establishment of the agency in 1947. Few, if any, of them were of Welch's high rank.

Welch was shot to death by three masked gunmen outside his home after returning from a Christmas party at the residence of U.S. Ambassador Jack B. Kubisch. As of last night U.S. officials reported no progress in finding the assassins.

"It was a symbolic assassination," said one U.S. diplomat, suggesting that the target might have been anyone in the American establishment.

Welch's name, along with that of other embassy officials was published on Nov. 25 in the Athens Daily News, an English-language publication. In that list, Welch was identified as a CIA agent. The CIA station chief's residence is well known in Athens.

In Washington as the President and State Department issued statements of regret there were efforts at various levels to link the murder of Welch with prior publication of his name in Counter-Spy as well as with general criticism of the agency.

There was also the expectation that the murder of Welch could create a backlash of reaction to criticisms of CIA activities by the congressional select committees looking into CIA excesses.

Tim Butz, a spokesman for the Fifth Estate, said yesterday that the name of Welch had first been brought to the attention of his organization by two Maryknoll missionaries who saw it in a Peruvian provincial newspaper last year.

They checked the name in the State Department biographic register and became convinced from the pattern of Welch's assignments and his Foreign Service status that he was a CIA officer.

He was listed in the winter, 1975, edition of "Counter-Spy" as CIA chief of station in Lima, Peru. His address was given as the U.S. embassy in Lima.

A large number of the names of CIA officials which come to the organization, said Butz, are taken from foreign newspapers and are checked out by the research staff of

"There is no one around here doing any victory dances today," Butz said of the



RICHARD S. WELCH

... slain in Athens

want to see anyone shot. But our purpose is to give people an idea of the strength and influence of the CIA as it moves people from country to country."

Fifth Estate describes itself as "an adversary organization" to the U.S. intelligence establishment which is devoted to "discovering abuses of power" by police and intelligence authorities.

David Phillips, head of the Association of Retired Intelligence Officers and a friend of Welch, was critical not only of the publication of names in Counter-Spy but also of the activities of Philip B. F. Agee, former CIA clandestine operations officer who described the activities and identities of CIA operatives in his book, "Inside the Company."

Agee is quoted in the winter Counter-Spy as saying that "the most effective and important systematic efforts to combat the CIA that can be undertaken right now are, I think, the identification, exposure and neutralization of its people working abroad."

Fifth Estate has already published the names of some 225 CIA employees, including lists of operatives released by Agee in England, where he resides. It compiled and listed the names of 150 station chiefs around the world this year.

Its next publication will include the names of CIA officials serving in Angola, in the large Paris station and in the U.S. embassy in Sweden. The Danish newspaper Information last July published a list of U.S.

yesterday that the list published in the Athens Daily News last month was derived from Counter-Spy. A spokesman for the newspaper said it came from an organization calling itself "The Committee of Greeks and Greek-Americans."

The CIA has played a controversial role in Greek domestic politics since the days of the civil war in the late 1940s. American intelligence officials were influential in forming the Greek counterpart of CIA, known by its initials KYP.

The CIA was strongly identified in Greece with the military junta that seized power in 1967 and ruled until July, 1974. Although no direct links were ever established between the CIA and the April, 1967, coup, most of the coup leaders were high-ranking members of KYP.

Welch had served in Cyprus in the early 1960s but is not believed to have previously served in Greece.

Some six months ago he replaced Stacey Hulse Jr. as chief of station in Athens. Hulse has previously been identified in public media and his professional identity was known to Greek governmental and political insiders.

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